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SIPDIS

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LABOR FOR ILAB  
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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: COMBATING CHILD LABOR IN THE PHILIPPINES

REF: A. MANILA 0971

- B. 04 MANILA 4072
- C. 04 MANILA 0962

1. (U) Two DOL-funded programs in the Philippines (as well as elsewhere in the region) are now focused on combating child labor. According to the GRP, over four million children are currently forced to work full time. Of these, 2.4 million are working in hazardous jobs such as mining, deep-sea fishing, and pyrotechnic manufacturing, as well as the commercial sex trade. Some children also fall victim to trafficking in persons (TIP). Details of the projects follow:

-- Community-based Innovations to Reduce Child Labor through Education (CIRCLE) Project: This USD 5 million initiative is the newest USG effort to combat child labor worldwide. The project has an emphasis on preventing the worst forms of labor that endanger and/or degrade children. Winrock International, a U.S.-based NGO, is the main partner coordinating this regional effort, which includes mini-projects in Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Vietnam as well as the Philippines. Winrock is working through local NGOs and community-based organizations in order to strengthen national and local institutions. The projects also seek to improve the host country's formal and non-formal educational systems so that children attend school and are not forced to work;

-- ABK (first three letters of the Filipino alphabet) Initiative: The International Labor Organization's International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor (ILO-IPEC) administers this USD 5 million project in coordination here with World Vision and the Philippine Departments of Labor and Employment and of Education. The program provides books, uniforms, and educational stipends to former child laborers, allowing them to return to school. In addition, it offers livelihood programs to parents to make up for lost income from their children's labor. Other foci include strengthening national policies to discourage child labor, raising awareness of child labor, and promoting the sustainability of anti-child labor programs run by schools and government. The ABK Initiative began in 2003, when ILO-IPEC began to identify children engaged in the worst forms of child labor. The first group of beneficiaries enrolled in school in 2004. More children will leave the work force and (re-)enter school when classes resume in June. The program is slated to continue through 2007.

2. (U) Labatt spoke at the opening ceremony of CIRCLE Project on April 11 and Laboff addressed its Filipino partners on April 14. On April 20, Laboff spoke at the first annual meeting of the ABK Initiative Child Labor Congress. Major media organizations attended the events, providing newspaper and television coverage that highlighted USG support.

3. (U) Next Steps: Mission will monitor the progress of both projects closely through meetings with partners and site visits. Mission will identify additional projects to support the USG's goal of reducing the incidence of child labor, a serious problem in the Philippines. We will also seek to establish some new child-specific components in USG-funded anti-TIP programs.

RICCIARDONE